

## **Māori urged to strike back at big tobacco**

Media release: The Smokefree Coalition  
4 December 2009

*"We don't smoke the shit, we just sell it. We reserve the right to smoke for the young, the poor, the black and the stupid."*

The response of an R J Reynolds representative when asked why none of the company's executives smoked.

The Smokefree Coalition says a Māori Affairs Select Committee inquiry into the tobacco industry in Aotearoa is an unprecedented opportunity for Māori to strike back at an industry that has robbed them of so many of their loved ones.

Submissions from the public are now being invited on the inquiry which will look closely at how the tobacco industry has promoted tobacco use among Māori and the consequences tobacco use has had for Māori.

Smokefree Coalition Director Prudence Stone wants New Zealanders, and particularly Māori, to make submissions telling the Select Committee of the devastating effects of tobacco use.

"For decades tobacco companies have literally gotten away with murder. They have deliberately marketed their killer product to minorities and indigenous populations and then paid expensive lawyers to exploit legal loopholes and evade responsibility," Ms Stone says.

"This is an industry that causes the deaths of about 600 Māori and 5000 New Zealanders every year. We now have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to call them to account, and this time they will have nowhere to hide."

The terms of reference for the inquiry include examining the impact tobacco use has had on the health, economic, social and cultural wellbeing of Māori, as well as on Māori development aspirations and opportunities.

Te Reo Marama Director Shane Kawanata Bradbrook says the inquiry offers Māori the opportunity to meet future developmental aspirations that are currently being impeded by tobacco use, and that personal stories from smokers and their families will help represent to the Committee the sickness and misery that is the reality of smoking.

"It is crucial that this Committee is provided with a clear and unequivocal picture of the harm tobacco use causes and that New Zealanders, even those who smoke, resent the way tobacco companies have profited from their slick marketing of addiction and death."

Te Hotu Manawa Māori Executive Director Moana Tāne agreed that this was the perfect opportunity to show the Committee first hand how Māori aspirations of whānau ora continue to be compromised by an unbridled and greedy tobacco industry.

“Every day in our work with Māori communities on marae around the country, we are confronted with the names and faces of whānau who have passed away prematurely, through smoking-related diseases.

“Of particular concern to Te Hotu Manawa Māori are the lung cancer rates for Māori women that are jaw-dropping by international standards. As whānau we want to move forward but the reality is we have big business working silently, anonymously and unfettered, to keep us smoking.”

The Smokefree Coalition, Te Reo Marama and Te Hotu Manawa Maori have organised seminars to assist health workers and members of the public in making submissions. Seminars will be held in Auckland on 10 December and in Wellington on 14 December. Information about attending and an inquiry submission tool kit can be found on the Smokefree Coalition ([www.sfc.org.nz](http://www.sfc.org.nz)) and Te Reo Marama ([www.tereomarama.co.nz](http://www.tereomarama.co.nz)) websites.

Submissions to the Māori Affairs Select Committee can be written, oral or made online at [www.parliament.nz](http://www.parliament.nz).

Submissions close on 29 January 2010.

For more information contact:  
Prudence Stone, Director  
The Smokefree Coalition  
04 472 0157 | 0276 482 020